

Trends in U.S. Adoptions: 2008–2012

Matthew Shuman, MSW
Child Welfare Information Gateway

Background

- There are no official statistics for the total number of adoptions in the United States. No single agency is charged with compiling this information. Agencies that collect adoption data do so for their own purposes and therefore count adoptions differently (e.g., by court cases filed, by birth certificates modified), which makes compilation difficult.
- Over the past 20 years, only a handful of national, comprehensive data sets have been compiled on the total number of children adopted in the United States.
- Information on total U.S. adoptions is needed by policymakers, government agencies, court personnel, social workers, adoption-related organizations, advocacy groups, and others to help guide adoption practice and policy, including strategies to increase placements, plan for postadoptive services, and determine funding and personnel needs.

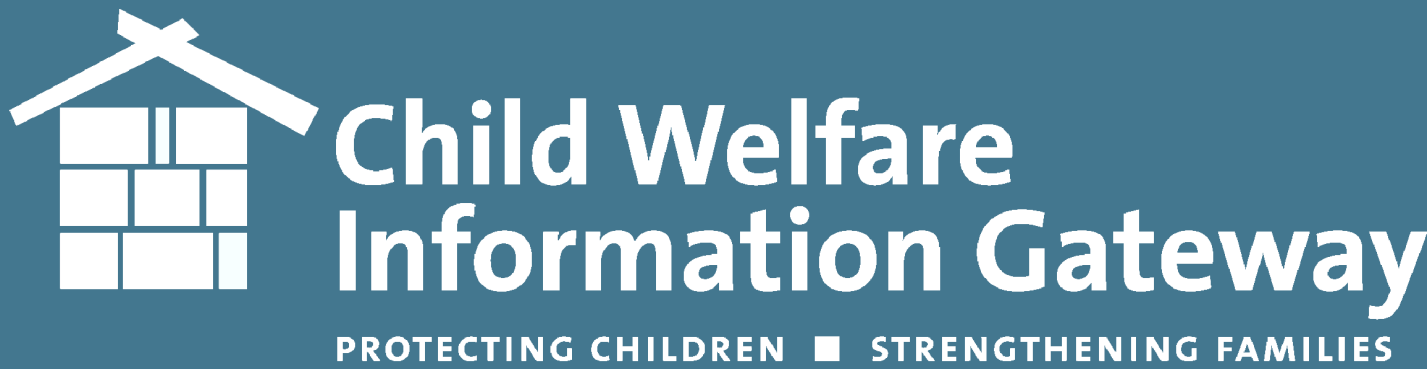
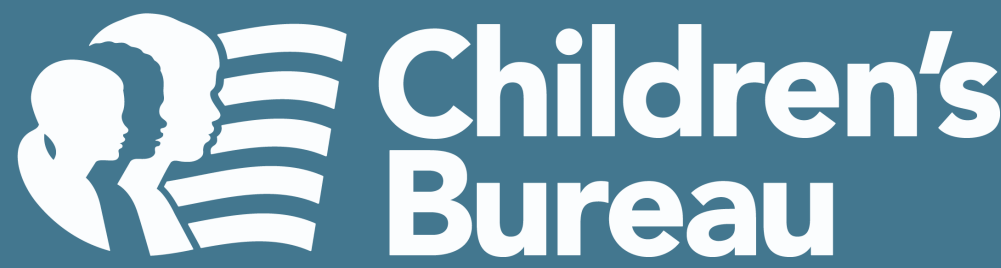
Methodology

This study estimated the total number of adoptions in the United States (50 States plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) by compiling data from the following sources:

- State courts:** Data on adoption filings (requests to adopt that are submitted to the court) or dispositions (decisions by the court to grant or deny adoptions) were obtained from the National Center for State Courts or directly from the States.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Children’s Bureau:** The total numbers of public agency adoptions are based solely on data submitted by State child welfare agencies to HHS’s Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).
- State Departments of Social Services (DSSs):** Data from State DSSs or similar agencies were sometimes used when domestic adoption data could not be collected from the courts.
- State bureaus of vital records:** Data from bureaus of vital records (or vital statistics) were sometimes used when domestic adoption data could not be collected from the State court. Bureaus of vital records base their data on the number of requests to amend birth certificates due to adoption.
- U.S. Department of State, Office of Children’s Issues:** This office collects data on the number of immigrant visas issued to children to enter the United States for the purpose of an intercountry adoption. All intercountry adoption data for this study were obtained from the Office of Children’s Issues website.

This study also yielded data for “other” types of adoption, which include all types of adoption that are not public agency or intercountry, such as private agency, tribal, facilitated, independent, and stepparent.

This research was supported by:



This research was originally published in Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2016). *Trends in U.S. Adoptions: 2008–2012*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau.

Results

2012 Adoption Rates Per 100,000 Adults

